

PLENTY TOO MUCH SERIES WEEK 3
HOW TO WALK IN RADICAL LOVE THAT CAN OVERCOME TERRIBLE HATE
6/7/2020

I. Introduction

- A. It sure has been quite a week for America and all of us. Covid-19 was hard enough. It was so painful to watch the murder of George Floyd and see it become like a bomb that blew down the dam on stored-up hurt and anger, over the systemic disease of racial bigotry, hatred, and division. Injustice matters so much to God and it matters to us. Of course, seeing the looting and the anarchy just added to the pain and feelings of conflict and hopelessness we're going through.

I shared Wednesday night that I felt the Lord was telling me that this is something that I am/we are to take personally to heart. We can't ignore it and wish it would go away. It is a moment in history where God wants us to be bridgebuilders and intercessors. Even though we may not have a lot of answers, we can try to step into others shoes.

We may not have solutions but we could have SEEDS to sow, that God could use along with millions of other people's seeds to change the world. We could be a little light that we take out from under our barrel to let shine with other lights to make a difference.

- B. As you know this is all happening in the middle of our series and campaign from my new book, "Plenty Too Much" about how, if we are willing to move from a scarcity to an abundance mindset, we can make our biggest difference for God. Nothing could be more applicable than a discussion of how important a PTM mindset is to addressing relational pain, division, and how to come to places of reconciliation and unity.

The very heart of Christianity is a call to the mindset Paul expressed in Phil 2, have in you the kind of mindset that Jesus had when he came from Heaven to reconcile a world at war with God and each other. It is a mindset in which Jesus didn't grasp his rights or his prerogatives but was willing to become like us, step into our shoes, become a servant in his attitude and ultimately even die our death, so that the wall between us and God could be removed.

He not only taught us but showed us a way to think and act that could turn enemies into friends. Jesus came to show us, give us, and put in us a love that is bigger than hate.

The gospel is the story of a God who came to show us love and then put in us a love so radical and powerful that it could heal the wounds of a thousand generations. It is a love that could give deeply hurt people the power to forgive, overcome devastating wounds, and move people that were on the furthest

ends of the spectrum in their views and opinions to a vision that is bigger than all of their differences.

I love the story of how one missionary saw this kind of radical love being released between two tribes in Indonesia. The tribes had been at war in an endless cycle of revenge, when one chief met Jesus. He tried to make peace with the other tribe and bury the hatchet, but it was never sustained. He and the other chief tried to talk and bring peace over and over. Then something happened. The Christian chief had a new baby son. In the next meeting he was moved to do something incredible. He offered to allow the other chief, who didn't have a son adopt his son. It was an incredible sacrifice. The result of this "peace child" was that the two tribes didn't just quit fighting but they became one family.

You see this is our gospel. God gave his own son, not only that we could be saved, but we could be one family. He not only did this for us, but he put his agape love in our hearts so that we could begin to live out of that.

- C. The secret of reconciliation is the ability to receive and realize that this same PTM kind of love is not only for us but in us. It is something that if we open the door to let love flow through us, can heal the wounds of the world.
Romans 5:5, The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

II. Why is this so important

- A. On a personal level, it is the way that each of us can be empowered to rise above our own hurts and offenses. We all in one way or the other experience hurts and wounds. These are crossroad moments. So many Christians get stuck in a hurt/offense and don't grow beyond that.

As you go through history, you see everybody who ever lived their best life, learned to rise above those offenses. They refused to let the evil or failures of others become evil and defeat in them. They exercised authority like Martin Luther King Jr., who said that nobody can make you feel like a failure without your permission.

They chose an abundance mindset of forgiveness instead of a poverty mindset of hate, hurt, and retaliation. They refused to believe the lie that if they drank the rat poison of hate it would make the rat die. They understood that it wouldn't make the rat die; it would make them die. They rose above their hurts to their destiny. *You may have meant it for evil but God meant it for good* was Joseph's declaration.

- B. Choosing this mindset of grace and compassion is the key to making our biggest difference. Love is God's secret weapon that changes the world. It is what Jesus brought as the secret weapon of transformation. Jesus was the greatest revolutionary in history. But his revolution was completely different than what

people expected or wanted. They wanted Jesus to be a political revolutionary and change the world from the outside in, by defeating the Romans and setting up an earthly Kingdom. But Jesus would say, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it was of this world my servants would fight and retaliate.” No, His kingdom was a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom that comes from within, from hearts changed by the work of the Holy Spirit through love that produces righteousness, peace, and joy.

Jesus modeled this by becoming a servant, by lavishing love especially on those who were most looked down on in society, who had the least and hurt the most, the outcast, the oppressed, those who were the first to have their rights taken away. He revealed the power of radical love ultimately on the cross, looking at his accusers and tormentors in the eye and saying, “Father forgive them, they know not what they do.”

It started a revolution. Jesus’ life is proof, “You can’t overcome hate with hate, you’ll only get more hate. You can overcome hate with love, because hate has no defense against love.” – Martin Luther King Jr.

This is seen when one of the world’s biggest haters named Saul, who later became known as the apostle Paul, was on a hate tour to get rid of this sect called Christians. He and his cronies came across a man named Stephen, who stood up and boldly told them his beliefs about Jesus. He and the others demonstrated something similar to what we think of as a lynching but this was a stoning. Instead of Stephen cursing, he prays for Saul and the others and the glory of God comes on him. The result of this love was that the hot coals of the conviction of the Holy Spirit came on Saul and eventually his heart was changed. Because of Jesus’ love, Paul writes the most famous poem on love in the history of the world that is found in I Corinthians 13.

This love gave birth to hospitals, justice for the despised, and a community of people called the church. The church demonstrated a way of love that built kingdom spiritual families where people would lay down their lives for each other, learn to work out their differences, and work together to transform society.

- C. It is by embracing this love that we break the strongholds of pride, selfishness, and fear that breed divisions, prejudices, hatred, and selfishness that produces the suffering of things like racism we see in the world today.

There is a powerful verse in James 4:1-3 (TPT) that addresses the source of things like racism and war.

“What is the cause of your conflicts and quarrels with each other? Doesn’t the battle begin inside of you as you fight to have your own way and fulfill your desires? You jealously want what others have so you begin to see yourself as better than others. You scheme with envy and harm others to selfishly obtain what you crave—that’s why you quarrel and fight. And all the time you don’t obtain

because you won't ask God for it! And you if you ask, you won't receive it for you're asking with corrupt motives, seeking only to fulfill your own selfish desires."

I couldn't help but observe that James defines so clearly a poverty mindset. If I could summarize it, he's saying that instead of looking to God and knowing how eager he is to provide all we need, we look to people and perceive them as a threat to what we have!

Fear is so much a part of this disease of racism and hate... it causes us to stereotype people in ways that we can only see the bad side of them because we have an agenda and because we feel threatened and see them as competitors and thieves of our opportunities, instead of potential partners of all that God wants to give us.

I love the story of the boys who are outside of a bakery when one of the boys comes and offers to give them all a piece of pie. As he starts to cut pieces of pie, the boys' start fighting over who is going to get the biggest piece of pie. It is a mess and everybody is fighting except the one boy who brought the pie. Someone asks him why he is so willing to let the others have all of the pie and he's not even fighting for his piece. He says, "O my Dad is the baker and owner of this bakery. He is glad to make as many pies and give me as much pie as I need."

I've so often felt embarrassed about how I've allowed myself to become a victim of anger. I've had times when on the highway, someone rudely came to cut me off and take my place. I've been shocked by my response and have had thoughts of passing them and slamming on my brakes or something. I thought that road rage might not be too good of an advertisement for a pastor. What is that? Why would I let them steal my joy? Possibly, show my grandkids in the car how to respond like a jerk? It's fear that something is taken away. The truth is there is nothing a person could take away, that God couldn't give me 10 times as much.

What if we weren't looking at people but to God for our dignity, worth, hopes and dreams? That is what David saw when Saul was trying to kill him. He had the chance to get revenge, but he believed God was the one who could promote him in a way that, when he got the crown it would be God who would protect him. So, he chose to leave vengeance in God's hands.

- D. A fourth thing is so big. We are learning in the PTM series that when we move in compassion, we can expect God to come and move in abundance in us and through us. In the story of the *Feeding of the 5000*, we read that the whole event of the miracle began with a phrase, "*Jesus was moved with compassion...*"

One of the most powerful things we see in the Bible and we've learned through experience is that when our hearts break with compassion, God's storehouse opens with miracles and treasures. Miracle-mountain-moving faith always rides in on the coat tails of love. Galatians 5:6 speaks of *faith that works through love*. I mention in the book how this happened with Bob Pierce, the founder of World Vision. World Vision has a child sponsorship program that helps tens of thousands of kids. He is famous for praying, "Lord break my heart with the things that break yours." Because Bob allowed that to happen for him with one child, the legacy of millions of changed lives has taken place.

My daughter Anna shared a bit on Wednesday night about her heart has been broken by the issues of race and injustice. She and others from our church decided to go to the protests downtown to pray and love. She and Joe even took their kids. In the process they prayed with several there, including one young African American student who had blown out his knee playing basketball. After they prayed for him, he started jumping up and down testifying the pain was gone. Anna was thrilled because she said it was one of the first times some of her kids got to see an instantaneous miracle on the streets.

III. So how do we operate in this radical plenty too much love that has the power to heal our hurts and remove the world's hate? I wanted to read Romans 12:10-21. (By the way verse 21 is our memory verse for this week.) He gives us several powerful ways that God's PTM love can be released in and through us.

A. Make an unconditional commitment to be a person who walks in love. Be a person who refuses to give yourself an excuse for not walking as an instrument of God's love to everyone, no exceptions. That starts with putting value on every person. Seeing every person as made in the image of God and thus worthy of kindness and showing respect to, even if I don't agree with them and even if they can't stand me.

Make the scorecard of your day, not how much you achieved or what you got to do but very simply how you loved. We are called to be bridgebuilders and that starts with valuing people, the way Jesus values you. It is choosing to believe the best, love people unconditionally, not because their actions deserve it but because that is who *we* are. O how our world needs this. How we need to stop pointing fingers, putting labels on people, criticizing their points of view. We need to get back to a fundamental commitment to live at peace with all.

I think one of the best examples of leadership and this value was President George W. Bush after 9/11, when there was such a backlash against Muslims. He brought before the camera's Muslim leaders and just positively affirmed the best about them and us. He affirmed that they were people who loved our country and we need to honor them and not let hate get in our heart.

- B. We need to love sincerely and practically. Our love needs to be practical and that starts with honesty, owning in any way we can how, perhaps, we've been part of the problem. Maybe we've been too quick to assume, maybe even to draw conclusions and make judgments. This is not the time to try to have answers; it's the time to ask questions. Possibly I need to be honest about sins of omission. Maybe I haven't been one who perpetrated prejudice but have been silent on the sideline.

Humility is always at the heart of healing and reconciliation. A prayer that I pray often is Psalms 139:23-24... "Search me and know my inner thoughts." One of the most important truths of Christianity is that the key to being righteous as a Christian is not in the way that we try to argue and convince people that we are right but in how willing we are to humble ourselves and admit that we are wrong. I believe we need to ask friends, maybe of a different group, what it's like to sit on the other side of you. Is there an offensive way in me I can't see?

- C. A third huge thing is to seek the path of empathy. The first law of a bridgebuilder is they seek more to understand than to be understood. In verse 16, he says don't be proud but be willing to associate with those of a lower or different position than you. Be willing to go talk to and listen to those who maybe you've been tempted to judge or assume things from.

Verse 15, rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Quite literally he is saying do everything you can to learn how to stand in other people's shoes and see life from their perspective. We had an African American friend named Akeem. Some of my family had a wonderful conversation asking him what it was like to grow up as an African American young man. It really moved my heart to hear how he always had to think of how to posture himself so as not to come across as a threat to people.

- D. In verse 19-20 he talks about not taking revenge, don't be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good. Refuse the evil that is in others attitudes or that comes flowing towards you over the airwaves. Refuse to let that offensive thing someone said or did to you get under your skin. Don't take "the bait of Satan" that would allow him to get a foothold in your life, and bring you down the level of those who hurt or degrade other people. Let God take care of vindication. On the contrary, return evil with good. Take action to forgive. Show love, not based on what they deserve in your mind, but on the love that God showed you on the cross. Boldly and courageously choose to put on love.

Conclude:

I know for all of us this sounds too overwhelming. Certainly, someone would say, "But you don't know what happened to us in our situation." I don't. That's why we are taught not to look

at ourselves or other people when dealing with feelings of hurt or hate that we're wrestling with in our lives. We have to look to God and his Holy Spirit.

I like what verse 11 says in TPT, "*Be enthusiastic to serve the Lord, keeping your passion toward him boiling hot! Radiate with the glow of the Holy Spirit and **let him fill you** with excitement as you serve him.*"

I would say that little phrase, "*let him fill you*" is one of the most important phrases in the Bible. The radical love that we all need to overcome personal offenses and be able to even show love towards those who hate us, comes not from us but THROUGH us as we're filled with the Holy Spirit.

It always begins with remembering the radical love of God towards us. You can't give away what you don't have. This kind of love we refer to in the Bible as agape love is something completely supernatural. It gets birthed as we consider and receive from the infinite eternal treasure house of love that God has and has demonstrated towards each of us. I love the verse in I John 3:1-2 (NKJV), that says, *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God... and... we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

It is a love demonstrated on the cross. It would be one thing if God forgave us for killing his Son Jesus. But Jesus didn't just forgive us, he took the punishment for what we did. It would be amazing if you forgave someone for stealing your house. It would be something altogether different if you offered and took their place by going to prison for 20 years for the crime they committed. But Jesus didn't just do that but did so much more than that. He forgave, paid our penalty, and then gave us *his* place to sit on *his* throne as a son/daughter with *his* righteousness to live with God forever and inherit everything that belongs to Jesus.

When we begin to know how God loves us and all that he has in store for us, we begin to be like the Baker's son. We aren't threatened. We aren't afraid. We have no need to be demanding. We are empowered. We know that even the worst threats against us can't stop the perfect and eternal plan of God for good in our life.

I love how one commentator summarized Romans 8:31-39.

"There is no situation in life no matter how difficult or hopeless that it may seem, no calamity that could come our way. No spiritual attack, even by all of the armies of Hell. There is no cruel action of people, no terrible injustice of society, no word or deed of an oppression that can separate us or prevent the perfect love and action of God at work on our behalf to be sure that his perfect good plan is fulfilled and that we end our race declaring-We are more than conquerors through him who loves us!"

It is as you grasp the depth of that love, you can then begin to be a conduit of that love to others. You don't do it by will power but by helplessly turning to the Holy Spirit to fill you and pour that love through you as you face the hurtful and impossible situation.

I shared the story of Corrie Ten Boom in my book forgiving the Nazi guard...

God can do that through you! He can do it in a way that frees you from offenses and truly makes you part of the solution not the problem. As I said earlier, God doesn't just want words of agreement, he wants us to sow seeds of action that could open the storehouse of Heaven. Someone said that actions of faith are small but if repeated enough those actions get traction.

We, at HFTW are optimistic and praying. We know that where sin abounds grace can more abound. If one tragic evil could start the avalanche of unrest, it is possible that our actions and prayers could help start an avalanche of revival for America around the world. Through history where division has tried to rule, God has poured out his Holy Spirit and brought love. We saw it in the early 70's when our nation was so divided by Vietnam. God poured out his Spirit and the theme of that revival was love, love, love. It happened with the Pentecostal outpouring of 1906. It can happen in 2020!